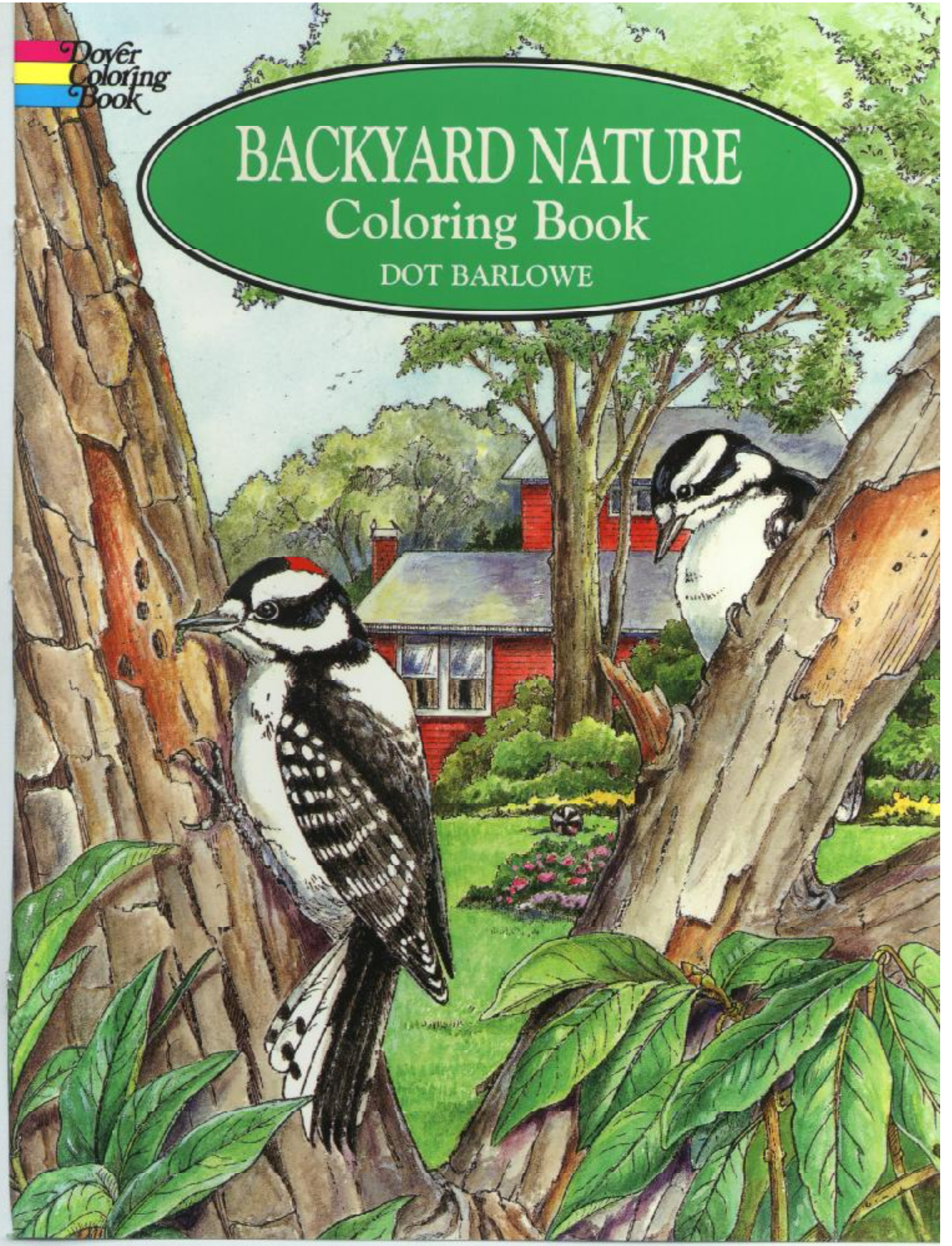
VISIT…

Dover Coloring Book

BACKYARD NATURE
Coloring Book

DOT BARLOWE



Introduction

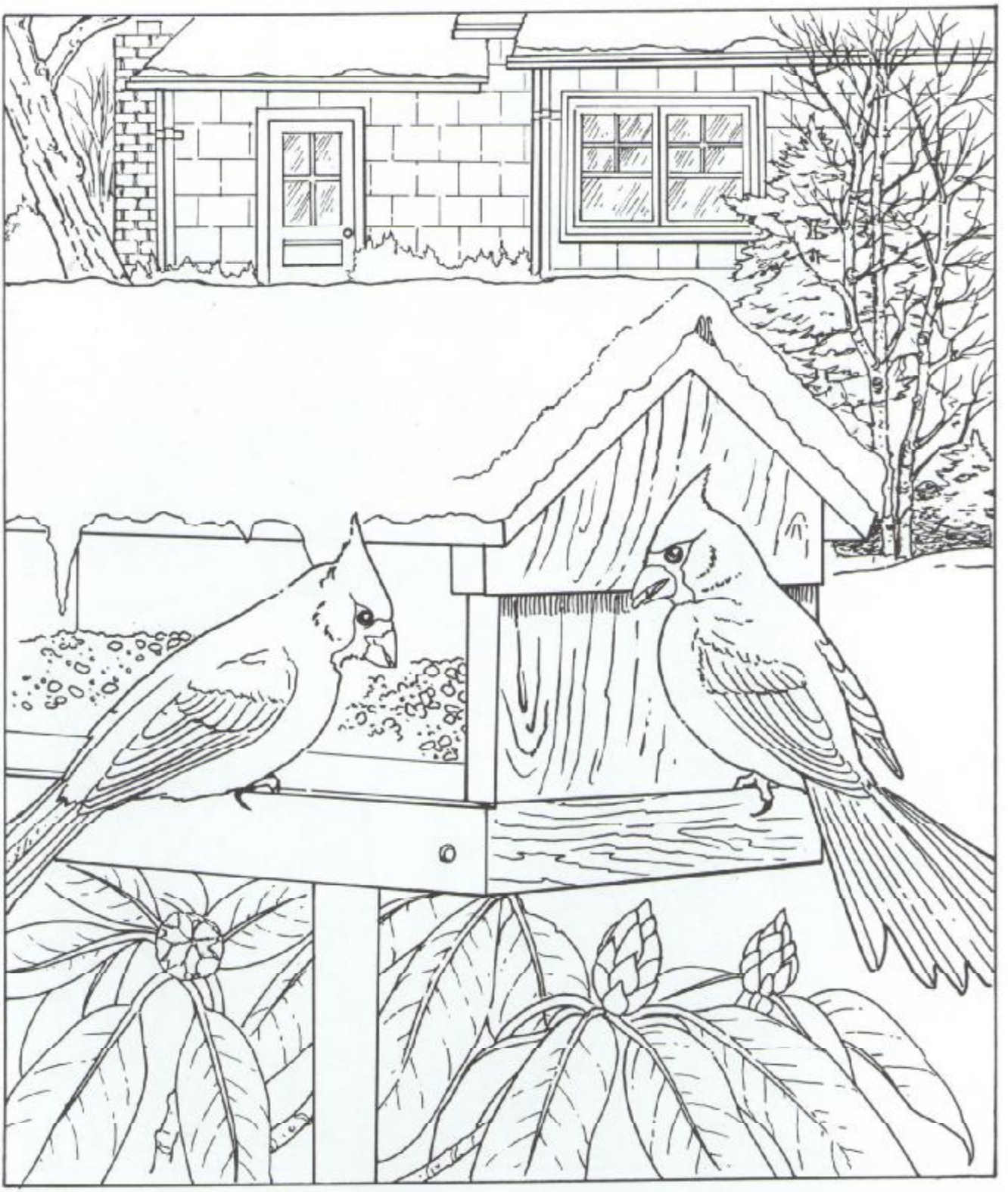
People who are fascinated by the variety of animals and plants in the world around them don't have to travel to distant places or rely entirely on printed or transmitted images to get acquainted with a myriad of creatures of all sizes and shapes. In every part of the United States, a person can observe and study the ways of life of creatures varied in form and function, simply by stepping out of the house into the backyard, or strolling to a local park. Among them are birds, mammals—including rodents—snakes, insects, spiders, frogs and toads, and worms.

Some of the creatures and plant life depicted in *Backyard Nature Coloring Book* are familiar to most people who live in North America. They can be seen in many of the fifty states of the United States, at least during part of the year. Most of the widespread and numerous species shown in their typical habitats have similar-looking close relatives in other parts of the country. By using a field guide or an illustrated manual of plants, anyone can get familiar with the coloration of the animals and plants shown in the 42 drawings. The same guides can help identify other plants that grow in local backyards, and the many kinds of animals that fly, crawl, hop, slither, or burrow in the vicinity.

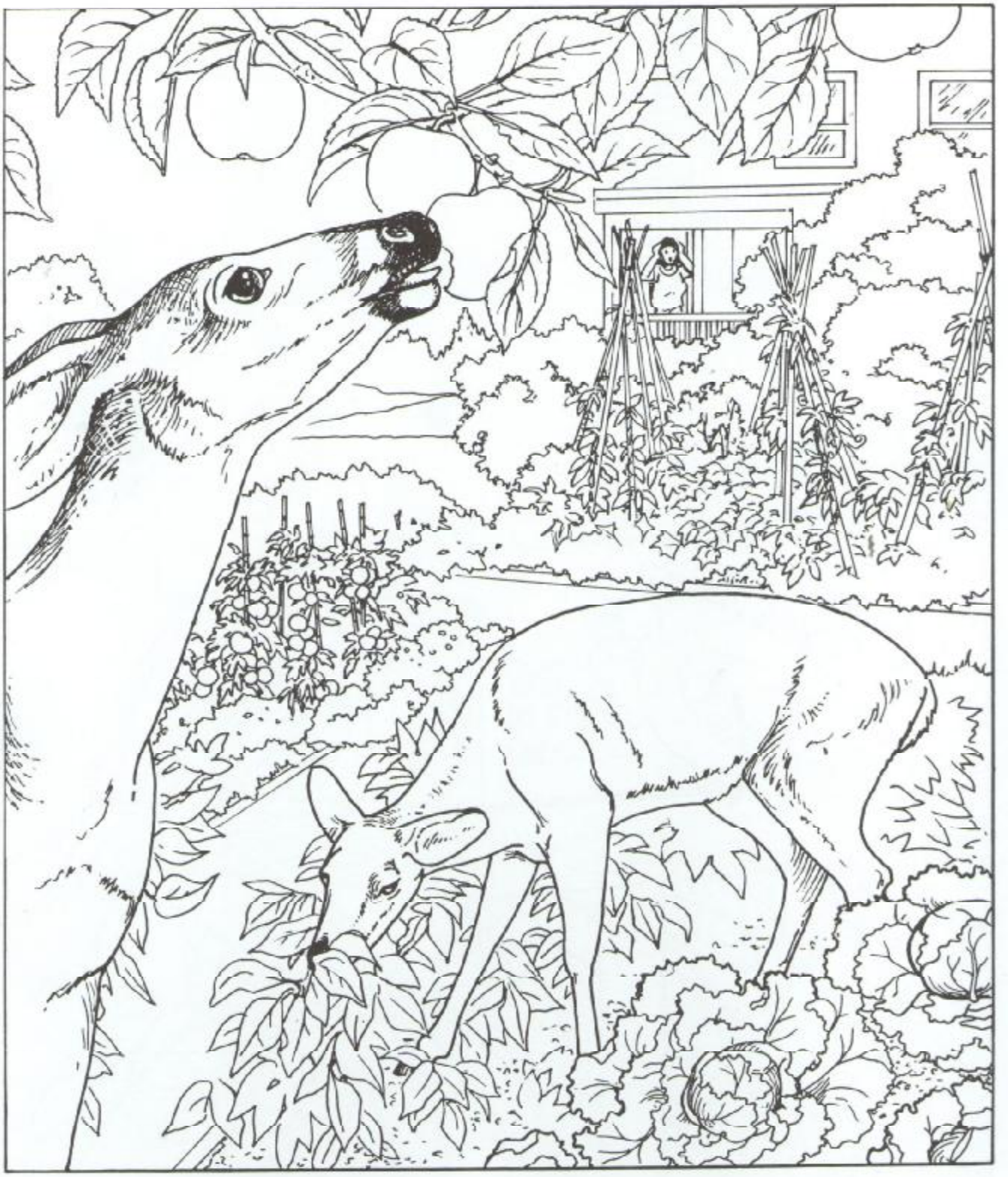
Backyard Nature Coloring Book offers glimpses of how humans' backyard neighbors—whether they are active by day or by night—get their food, build their homes, and care for their young. No matter what the climate or the season, something is growing and moving around in every cubic inch of every backyard!

Toads have thick bodies with warty, dry skin. North America is home to 18 species of toads, all in the genus *Bufo*. Glands on either side of their neck produce a sticky white poison that causes inflammation and nausea in any creature that bites the toad, and can kill the attacker. Toads breed in spring and summer, at ponds. The males sing to attract females. This toad is sheltered by a large **horsemushroom**. These mushrooms got their name because they often grow in pastures where horses graze. At the left are ferns and in the background zinnias are growing.

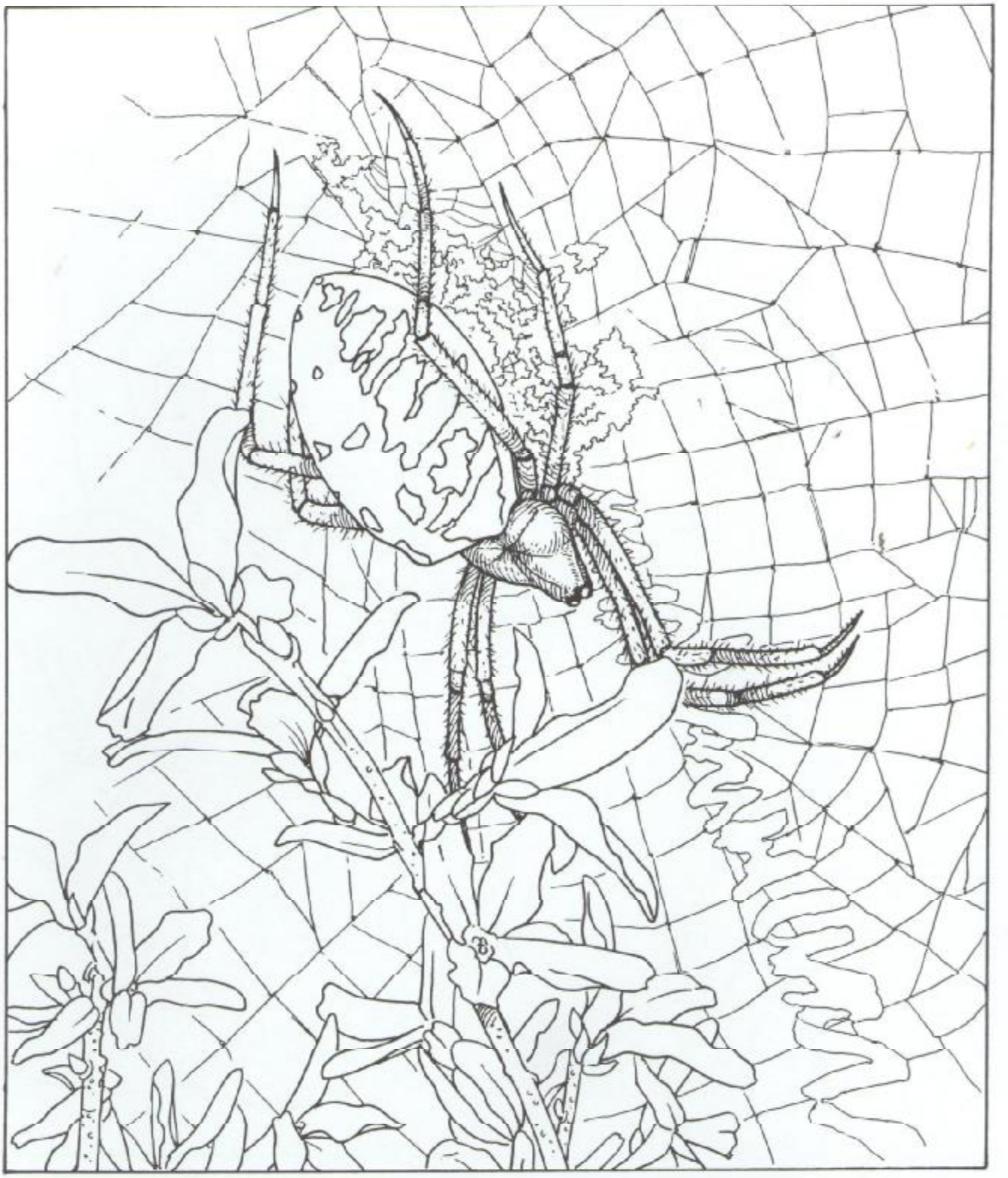
Dozens of varieties of **garter snakes** live in North America. Some prefer relatively dry areas, such as meadows and fields, while others live at the edges of marshes, streams, ponds, or lakes. Female garter snakes usually give birth to at least 5 young at a time, and some species give birth to 60 or more. The snake seen here has made a rock garden its home.



A pair of **northern cardinals**, the female at the left and the male at the right, are visiting a feeder during the snow season. Cardinals are easily recognized because they have a crest atop their heads and a red beak. Males are red all over, except for a black face. Females are buff-brown or buff-olive in color, with some red on the wings, tail, and crest. Common in the eastern United States and Canada, cardinals do not migrate to a warm climate in winter. Suburban gardens are among the places where they live.

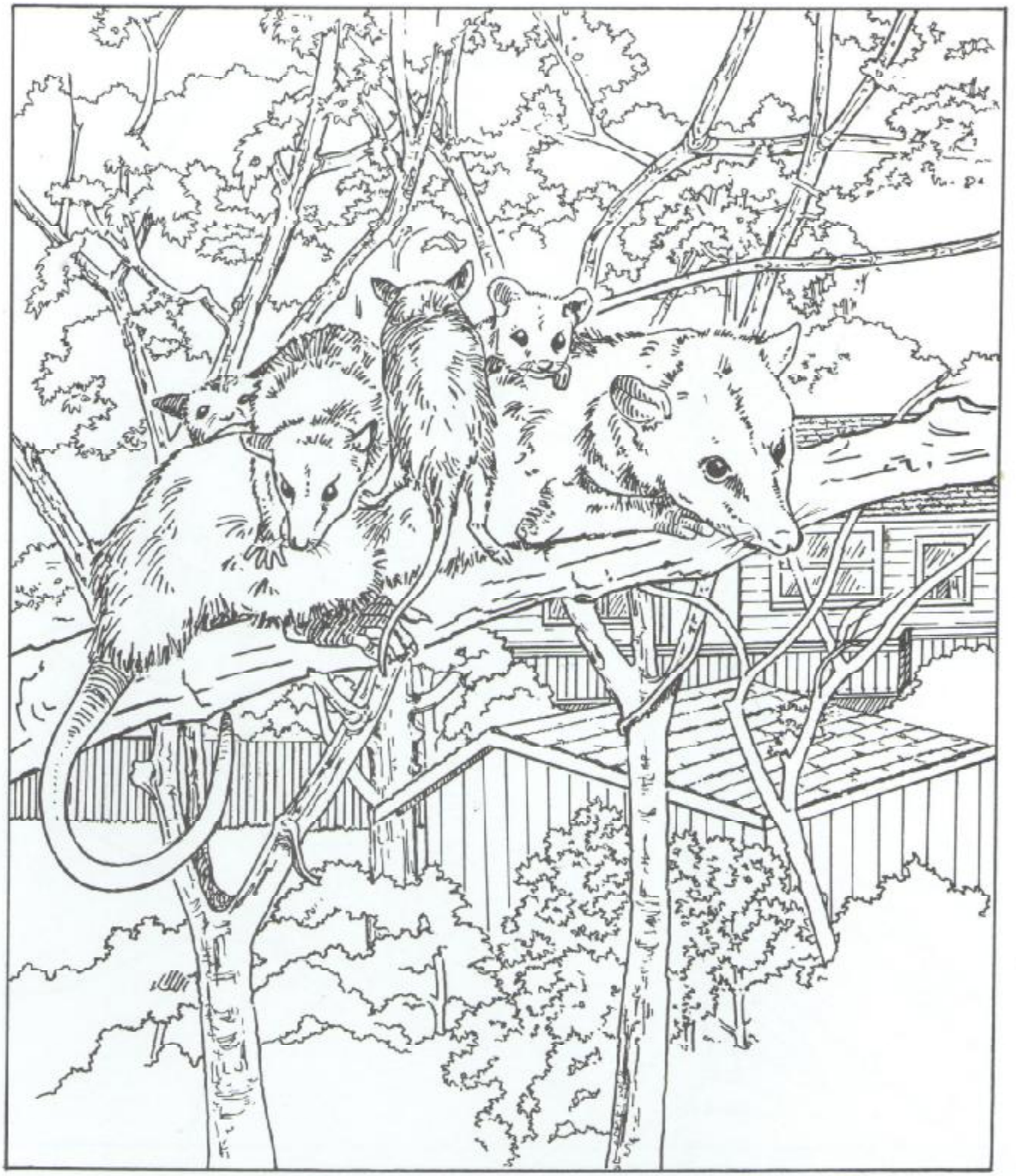


The **whitetail deer**, also known as the Virginia deer, is named for its relatively long, thick tail, which is white on the underside. It is the largest deer in North America. Whitetails like to live in open brushy areas, as well as in forests and swamps. A browser that eats twigs, shrubs, grass, herbs, fungi, and acorns, the whitetail deer will eat plants in young orchards, farm fields, vegetable gardens, and even suburban yards. The two shown have gotten into a vegetable patch near a home.



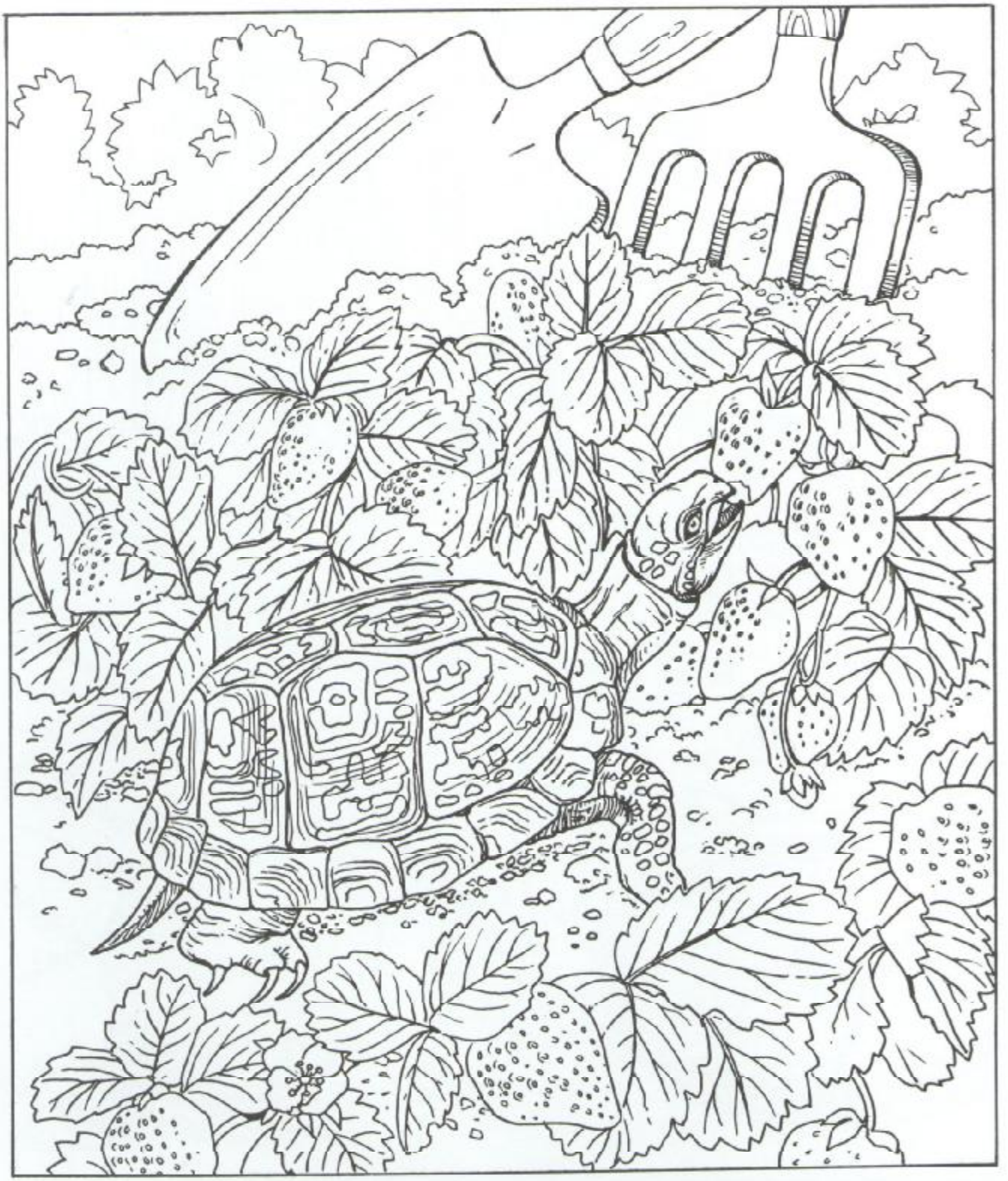
Garden spiders, also known as cross spiders, have bodies brownish-orange in color. Their legs look darker because they have brown bands. The spider's back has a row of silvery, diamond-shaped spots, some dark-brown bands, and various smaller spots and bars. These spiders live in city and suburban gardens, between houses and shrubs. Each night they spin a new orb-pattern web. This spiderweb is on a forsythia bush.

The **Japanese beetle**'s head and the fore part of its body are a bright metallic green; the rear parts are brownish or reddish orange. This beetle was introduced into North America by accident in 1916, in a shipment of flower roots imported from Japan. It is considered to be a major garden pest, as it damages the leaves and fruit of many plants. The beetles shown here are on a rose blossom. Within the circle at the lower right is a beetle grub, shown underground. Japanese beetle larvae feed on the roots of grasses, vegetables, and nursery plants.



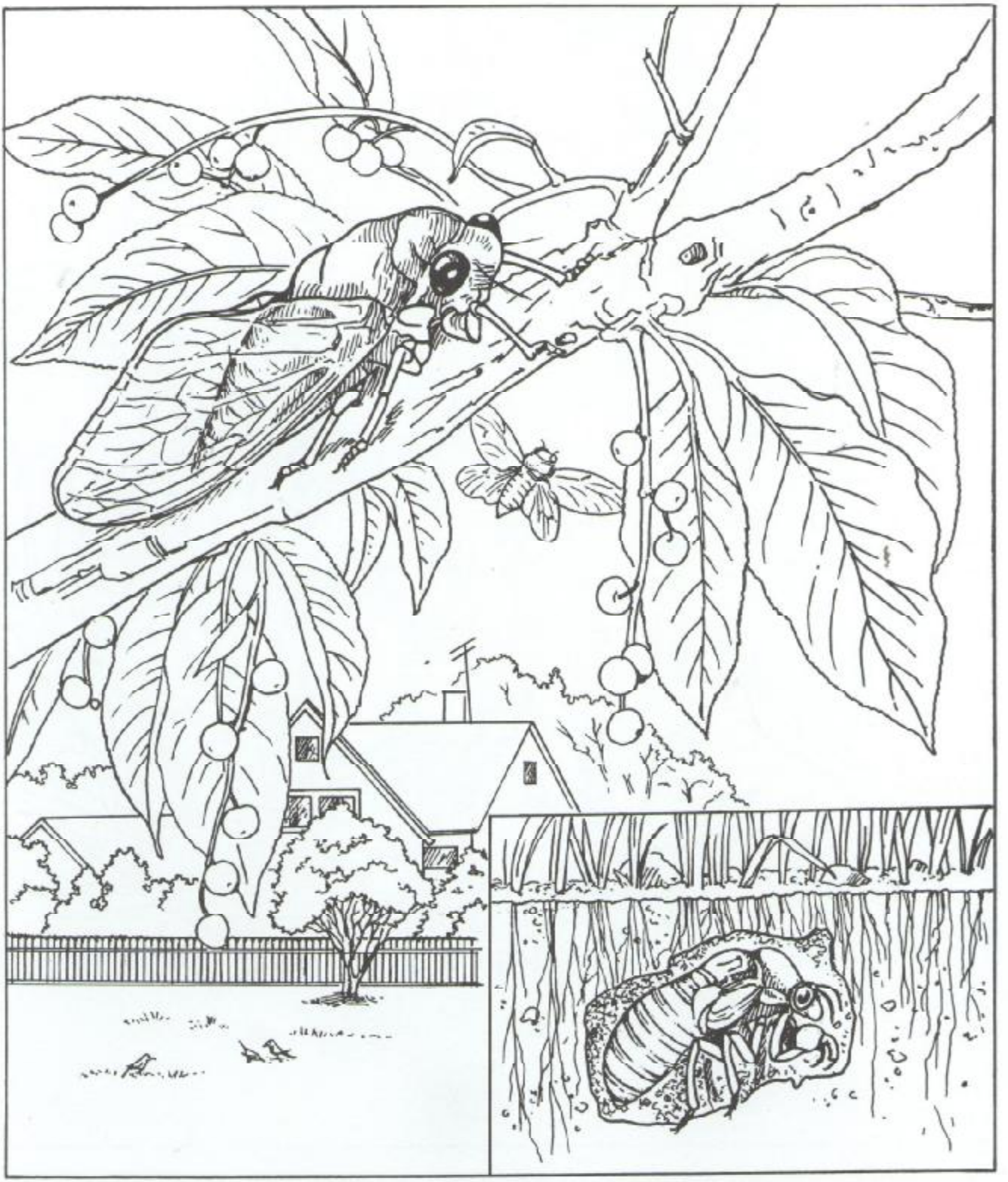
The **Virginia opossum** or common opossum is found throughout the eastern United States and in southern Ontario in Canada. A nocturnal creature that climbs trees well, it likes to live in woodlands and farmlands. Fruits, vegetables, and insects are parts of its diet. The phrase "playing possum" refers to this creature's defense of pretending to be dead when it fears an attack. This coarse-furred animal has a long, scaly, prehensile tail. The opossum is the only marsupial (a mammal that carries its young in a pouch) that lives north of Mexico. Here a female opossum is shown with her young. Two litters, from each of which 6-9 young opossum usually develop in the pouch, are born each year.

The female **praying mantis** is green and the male is tan or yellowish brown. Both have a triangular head, compound eyes, and delicate antennae. This insect, introduced from southern Europe by accident in 1899 as a "hitchhiker" on some imported nursery plants, was welcomed as a possible means to reduce the growing population of gypsy moth caterpillars, which were damaging plants in the eastern United States. However, because the female praying mantis often eats the male after mating, and praying mantis nymphs often eat each other, these mantises usually are not numerous enough to keep caterpillar pests under control. This praying mantis is perched on a petunia blossom.



Either the Eastern or the Western species of **box turtle** is found in many parts of the United States, including the eastern and north-central states, along the Gulf Coast, and in the Southwest, and also lives in northwest Mexico. Box turtles eat insects, earthworms, berries, fruit, and fungi, among other things. The Eastern box turtle has a shell that is brown to olive in color, with irregular yellow markings. Four subspecies vary in coloration and markings. The male Western box turtle, in mating season, pursues a female until he overtakes her, then stands on his hind legs and hurls himself at her from behind, spraying a stream of fluid on her from both nostrils for as long as half an hour. Then mating occurs. The box turtle shown here is visiting a strawberry patch.

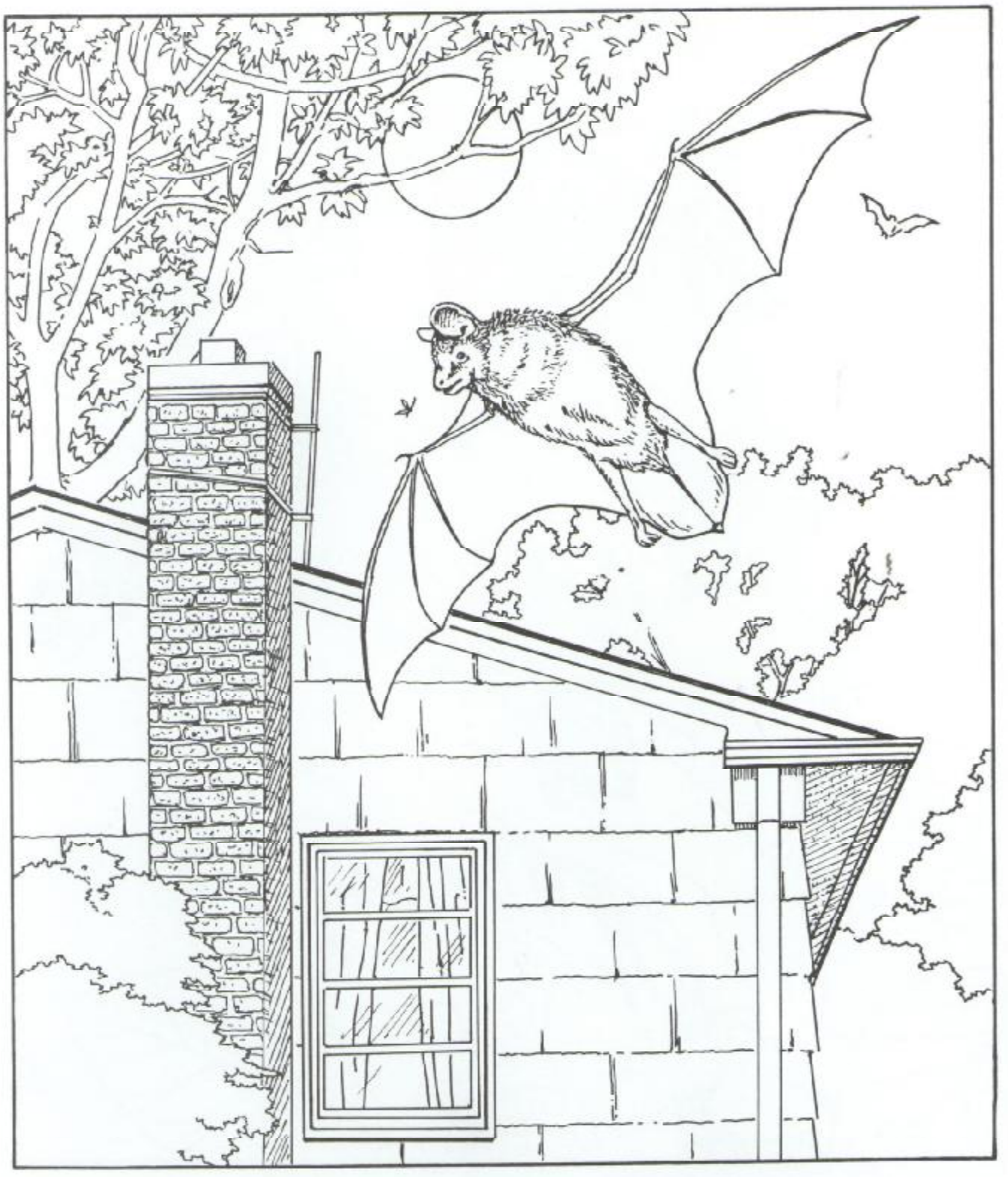
Raccoons may weigh up to 35 pounds (15.4 kg). Their body fur is a pepper-and-salt mixture of black and white. They are known for the black "bandit mask" over their eyes and for their thick ringed tail (less than half the length of the body), on which yellowish-white bands alternate with black. Raccoons mainly are active at night. They tend to live where they can forage for food along streams or lake shores. They will eat almost any plant or animal matter they can get, including insects, nuts, and birds' eggs, as well as food garbage from houses and restaurants. The three seen here are raiding a household trash receptacle.



All of the many varieties of **cicadas** have membranous wings (the front pair is twice as long as the back pair) and feed on plant matter. Cicadas do not jump, as grasshoppers and crickets do. Each species emits a different sound, ranging from a loud buzz to a clacking noise. In July and August, thousands of empty nymphal skins may be seen dangling from trees after the adult cicadas have emerged and flown away. Some species in eastern North America live as long as 17 years, mostly below the surface of the earth, in a nymphal stage, feeding on tree roots. The periodical cicada emerges in a given locality only once in every 13 to 17 years. In the box at the lower right, a cicada pupa is shown underground.

Hornworms are the larval stage of hawk moths. They feed on leaves. Their name refers to the single horn found on the upper surface of their smooth body, just behind the head. Tomato hornworms or northern hornworms are pests that damage tomato, tobacco, and potato crops. They are green and may be as long as 4 inches.

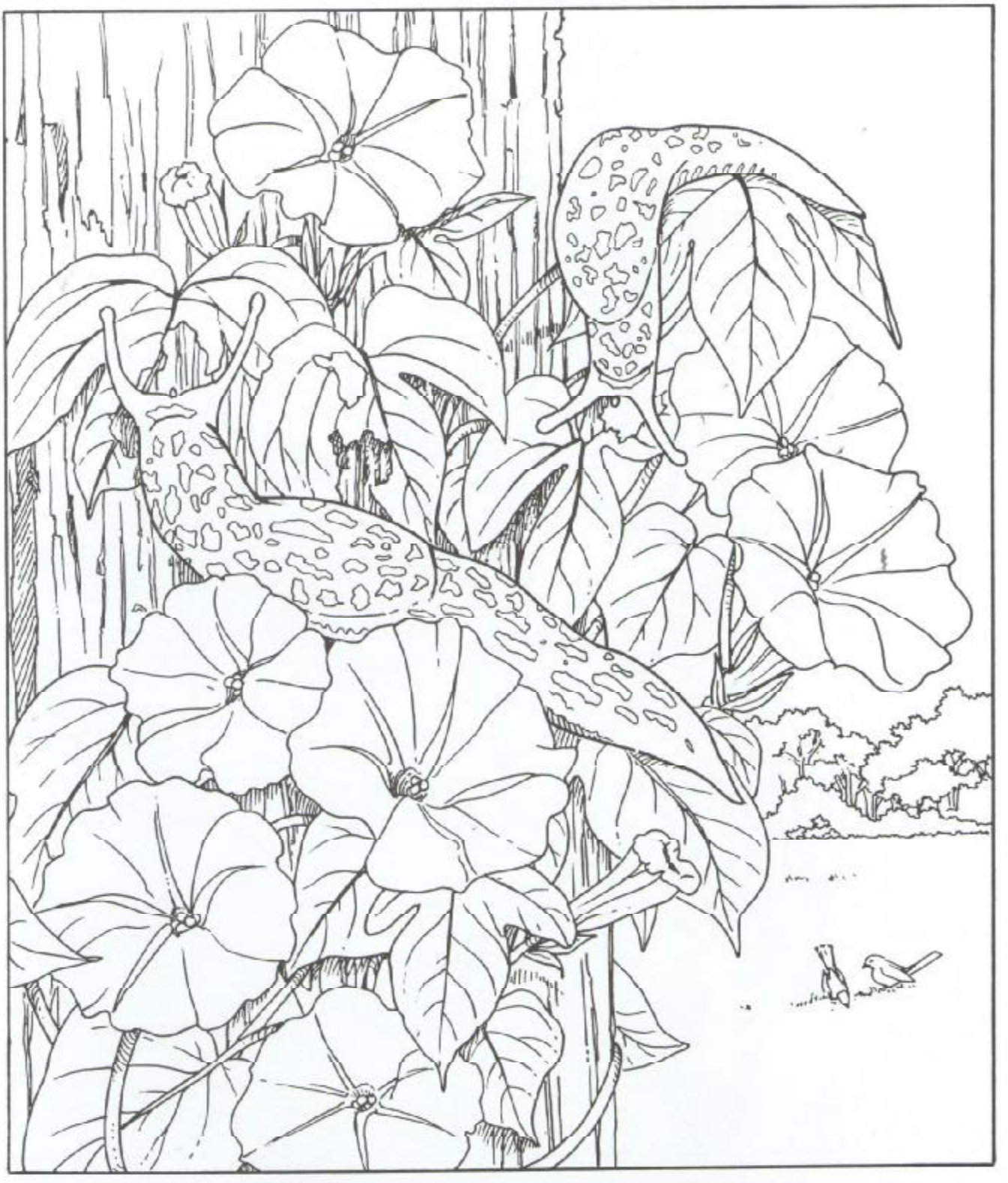
Honey bees were brought to North America during the 17th century. Their natural behavior is profitable to humans, because they pollinate crops, as well as wildflowers, and they produce honey. There are three types of honey bees, all of which have compound eyes. The male drones are the largest. The sterile female worker bees are the smallest. The queen bee (each colony has only one) has a long body, a large abdomen, and small eyes. Honey bees are social insects that work together to maintain the queen bee during a lifespan that usually is two to three years, but may be as long as five. New queen bees are born once a year. The first one kills the others, and the old queen leaves the hive with a swarm of worker bees to form a new colony. These bees are at work on a rugosa rose.



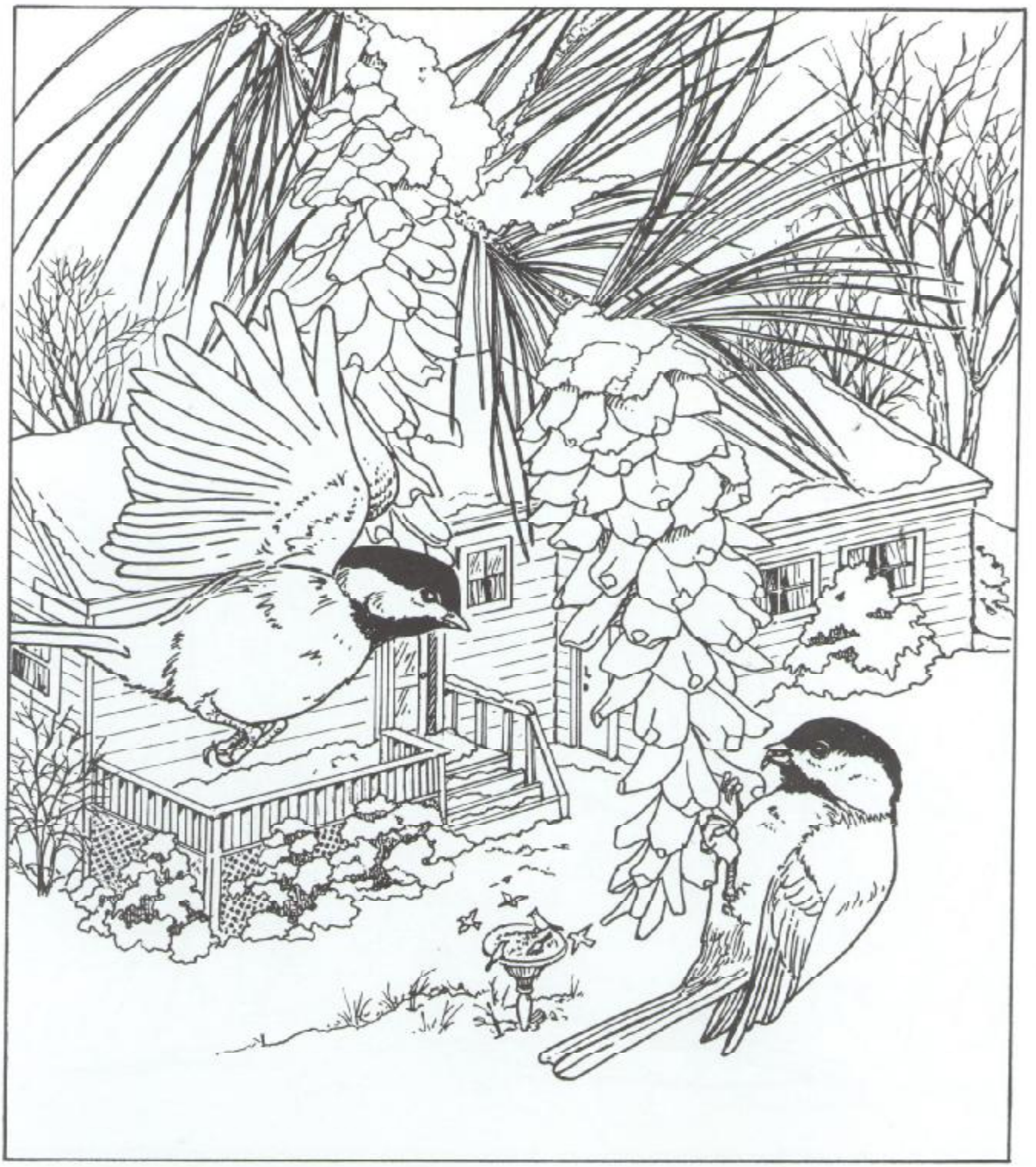
The **little brown bat**, *Myotis lucifugus*, probably is the most common bat found in the United States and Canada. Many of them live in buildings during the warm months, in climates where the temperature varies greatly with the changing seasons. In winter they hibernate in caves, living on stored body fat. Attics and barns are popular roosting places for these bats. Some will be found living under roof shingles or behind shutters, too. The caves preferred by these bats for hibernation have little air movement, stable temperatures above freezing, and high humidity. Most of the bats' body functions are suspended or reduced to minimal levels, so that little energy is consumed during the hibernation period.

House sparrows, also known as English sparrows, were brought to North America from the British isles. They have thicker bills and shorter legs than sparrows native to North America. In mating season, the male has gray feathers on the crown of the head, chestnut color from the eyes to the nape of the neck, white cheeks, and a black bill and bib. The two pictured are enjoying a birdbath. House sparrows are numerous in populated areas and will nest under eaves and in other parts of houses. They also will tear petals from low-growing garden flowers. Along with starlings, house sparrows probably are the most numerous wild birds in the world. They are among the many species that establish a "pecking order." These sparrows are surrounded by daylilies.

The **whitefooted mouse** likes to eat seeds, nuts, and insects. These two mice are feasting on sunflower seeds from a fallen blossom. Whitefooted mice, which usually live in wooded or brushy areas, are active at night. They store seeds and nuts to have food during the winter. The fur of the upper body ranges from pale brown to reddish brown; the belly and feet are white. Although whitefooted mice are classified as long-tailed mice, the tail usually is not as long as the head and body together. Two to six young are born at a time, and a female may have two to four litters a year. Whitefooted mice are fairly numerous. Populations of 4-12 per acre have been counted. They are found in most states except Florida and the Rocky Mountain and Pacific coast states.



Slugs are land mollusks with no shell. Two kinds that are garden pests are *Arion hortensis*, which is yellowish-brown or dark gray, and the large *Limax maximus*, which is light gray with black markings. These garden slugs shelter themselves from the sun during the day, as they need to keep their bodies cool and moist. At night and on rainy or overcast days, they forage for food. These slugs are traversing morning glory flowers and leaves.



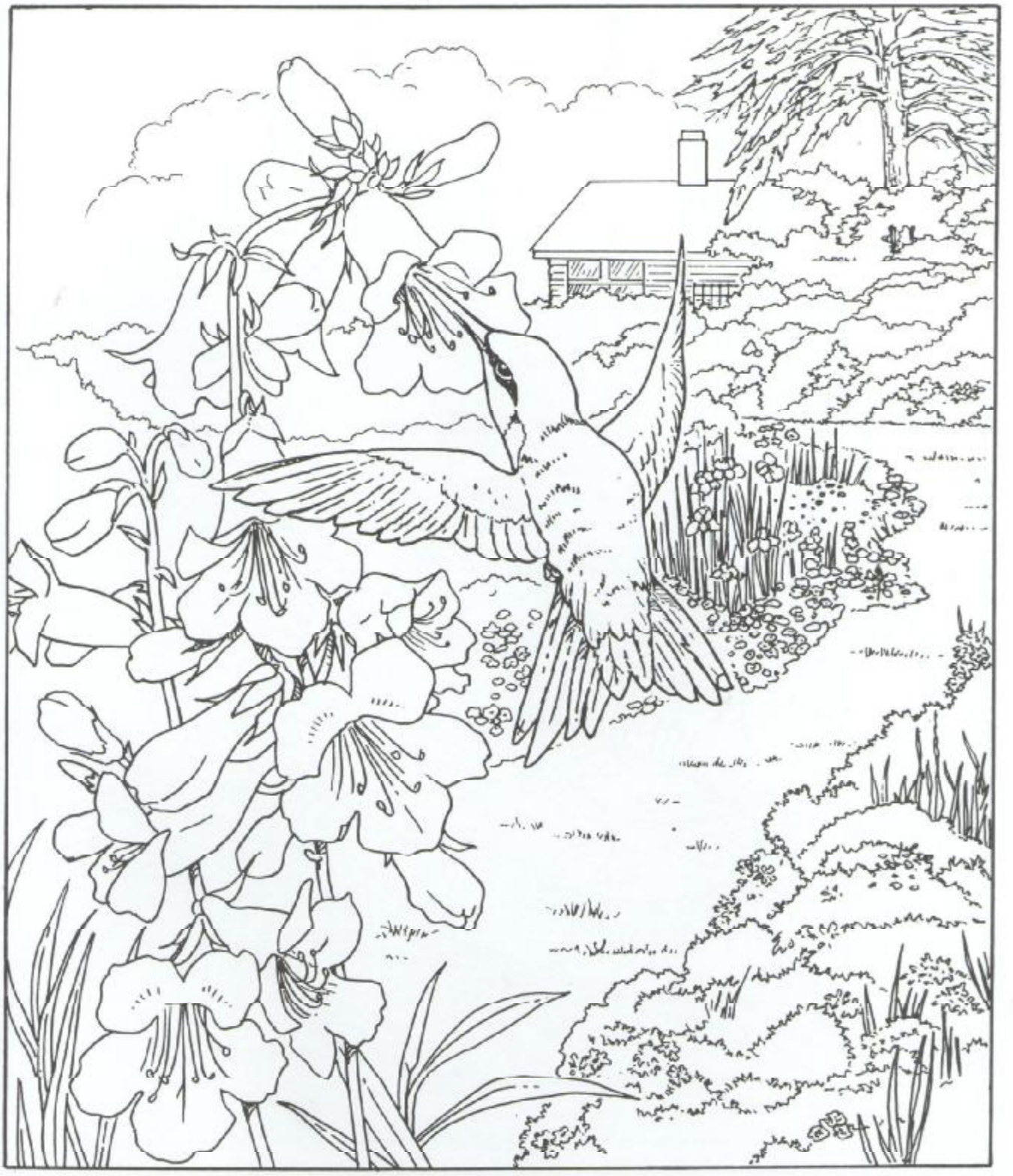
Seven species of **chickadees** live in North America. Most widespread are black-capped chickadees (found mainly in the northern U.S. states and in Canada), Carolina chickadees (found in the Southeast), and mountain chickadees (found in the Rocky Mountain and northwestern states and in western Canada). Those three have a black cap atop the head, white cheeks, and a black bib on the throat. Mountain chickadees also have white "eyebrow" lines. The distinctive chestnut-backed chickadee lives near the Pacific coast; the Siberian tit (or gray-headed chickadee) is found in Alaska. They do not migrate to warmer climates. Chickadees eat insects and spiders that they find under leaves and bark. Males share in building the nest, sitting on the eggs, and feeding the nestlings. These chickadees are at a white pine tree.

Most **rabbit** species have long ears, hind legs longer than their forelegs, soft fur, and a short, fuzzy tail. The well-known image of irate Mr. McGregor, harassed by the daring Peter Rabbit, is based on fact: both eastern cottontails and mountain cottontails consume considerable quantities of shrubs, garden plants, and vegetation that farm livestock otherwise would eat. However, the fact is that most rabbit species do not do much damage to crops or vegetable gardens. Some eat grass in suburban backyards and lawns. The expression "breed like a rabbit" also is related to cottontails: they give birth to three or four litters a year and, like most rabbits, produce at least 2 and as many as 8 young at a time. This rabbit has paused under a lilac bush.

Tiger swallowtails and western tiger swallowtails are common in the eastern and western United States, respectively, and in Alaska and much of Canada. Both female and male tiger swallowtails are beautiful and eye-catching in appearance. They sip nectar from a variety of flowers. Two other tiger swallowtail species live in western Canada and the United States. The butterfly seen here on an impatiens plant has the coloration shared by all male and some female tiger swallowtails. Most of both wing surfaces is yellow. There are black "tiger stripes" on the yellow, and yellow and orange segments within the black borders of the wings. Some females have a very different coloration. The upper wing surfaces are black, with border spots of yellow, pale blue, and orange, and a cloudy area of pale blue may be present on the hind wings.

The **common grackle** is found in almost all areas of the United States, except in west Texas and west of the Rocky Mountains. They flock in fields, marshes, parks, and suburbs. Their call is a loud "chuck" sound. The great-tailed grackle lives in the Southwest, and the boat-tailed grackle is found in Florida and a couple of other small areas in the Southeast and Mid-Atlantic states. Grackles' feathers seem black from a distance, but males have a glossy purple tinge on the head, neck, and breast. Those in New England and west of the Appalachian mountains have a bronze sheen on the rest of the body. Females have a duller coloration. The grackles seen here are hunting insects in tall lawn grass.

The **eastern chipmunk** and the **least chipmunk** are common in the United States and Canada. The eastern chipmunk, shown here, lives as far west as Wisconsin. North and South Dakota, and Nebraska, and in southeastern Canada. The least chipmunk lives in the Rocky Mountain states and much of Canada. The stripes on its face are more prominent than those of the eastern chipmunk. Also, the least chipmunk is smaller, and its tail is about the same length as its head and body. The stripes on its back and sides extend to the base of the tail. The fur may be pale yellowish-gray or a tawny gray, with black and whitish stripes. Chipmunks dig burrows and sometimes eat fruit and flower bulbs in orchards and gardens. In northern areas, they hibernate during the winter. The animals shown are gathering acorns to store as food. The one in the background has filled its cheek pouches.



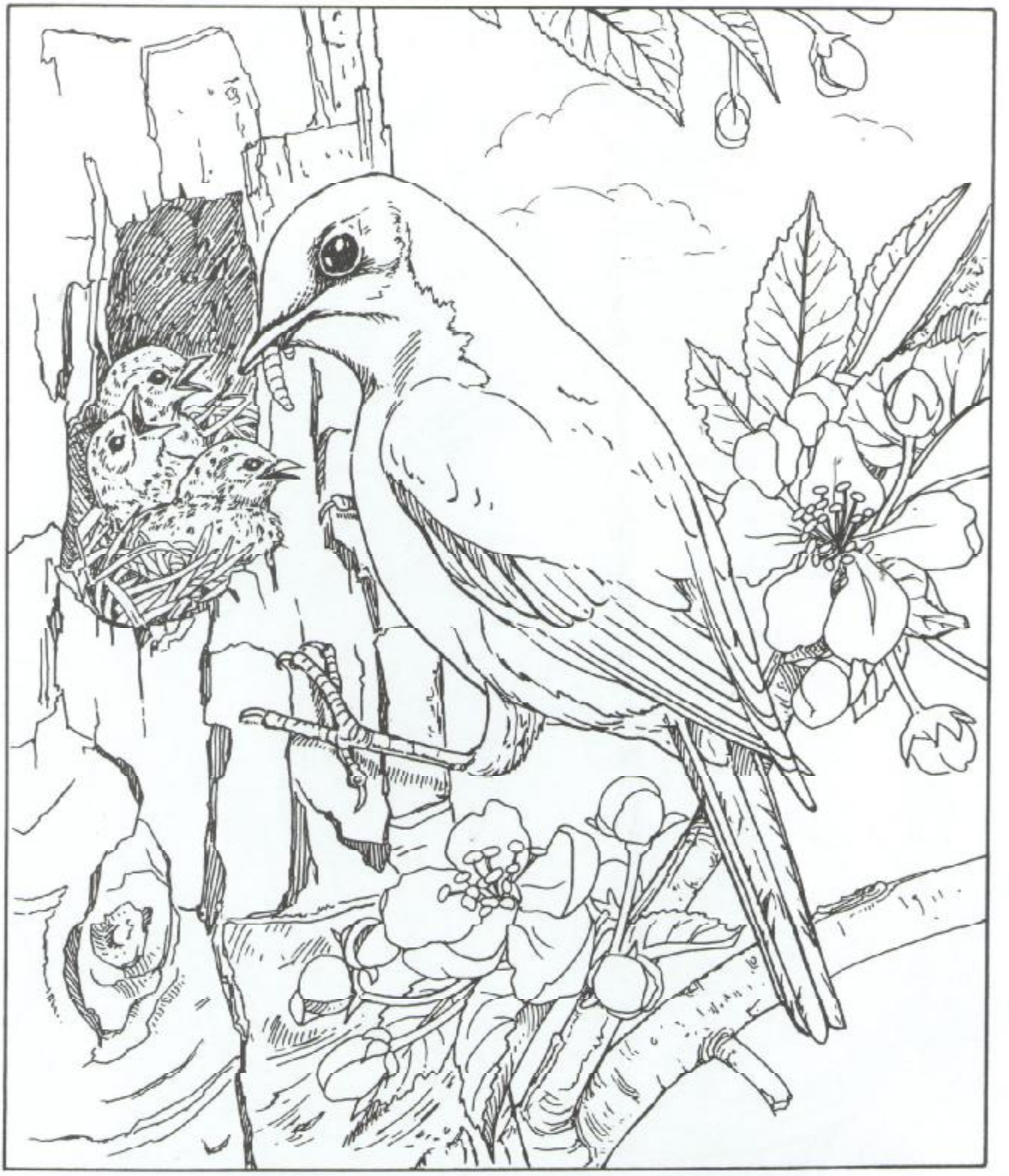
Several hummingbird species are seen in some southern U.S. states at times, but only **ruby-throated hummingbirds** are found in the entire eastern half of the United States and in southern Canada. They hover at 55-60 wingbeats per second. Their diet is nectar and tiny insects, and the young are fed by regurgitation. Black-chinned hummingbirds live in the west, from Texas to the Pacific coast. Ruby-throated hummingbirds have metallic green plumage on the upper body and white below. Adult males have a bright red throat and a black chin. Black-chinned males have a violet-colored band at the base of the black throat. The two species' females and young resemble each other. This hummingbird is about to drink nectar from a penstemon flower (also known as beard-tongue), which may be red, yellow, white, purple, or blue.

A 10-inch-long **earthworm** may have as many as 150 body segments. The most common species of earthworm in the eastern United States is *Lumbricus terrestris*. These brown worms have a red tinge because their blood carries red hemoglobin pigment. Earthworms have no eyes or ears, but they perceive differences in light, and vibrations. They consume decaying plant and animal matter, taking in earth and pebbles at the same time. Each worm takes in and excretes its own weight in nourishment and earth elements each day. All earthworms have both female and male reproductive organs, but it takes two earthworms to reproduce. Many birds and animals eat earthworms. Humans use them as bait for fish, which gives them their other name, angleworms ("angling" is another word for fishing).

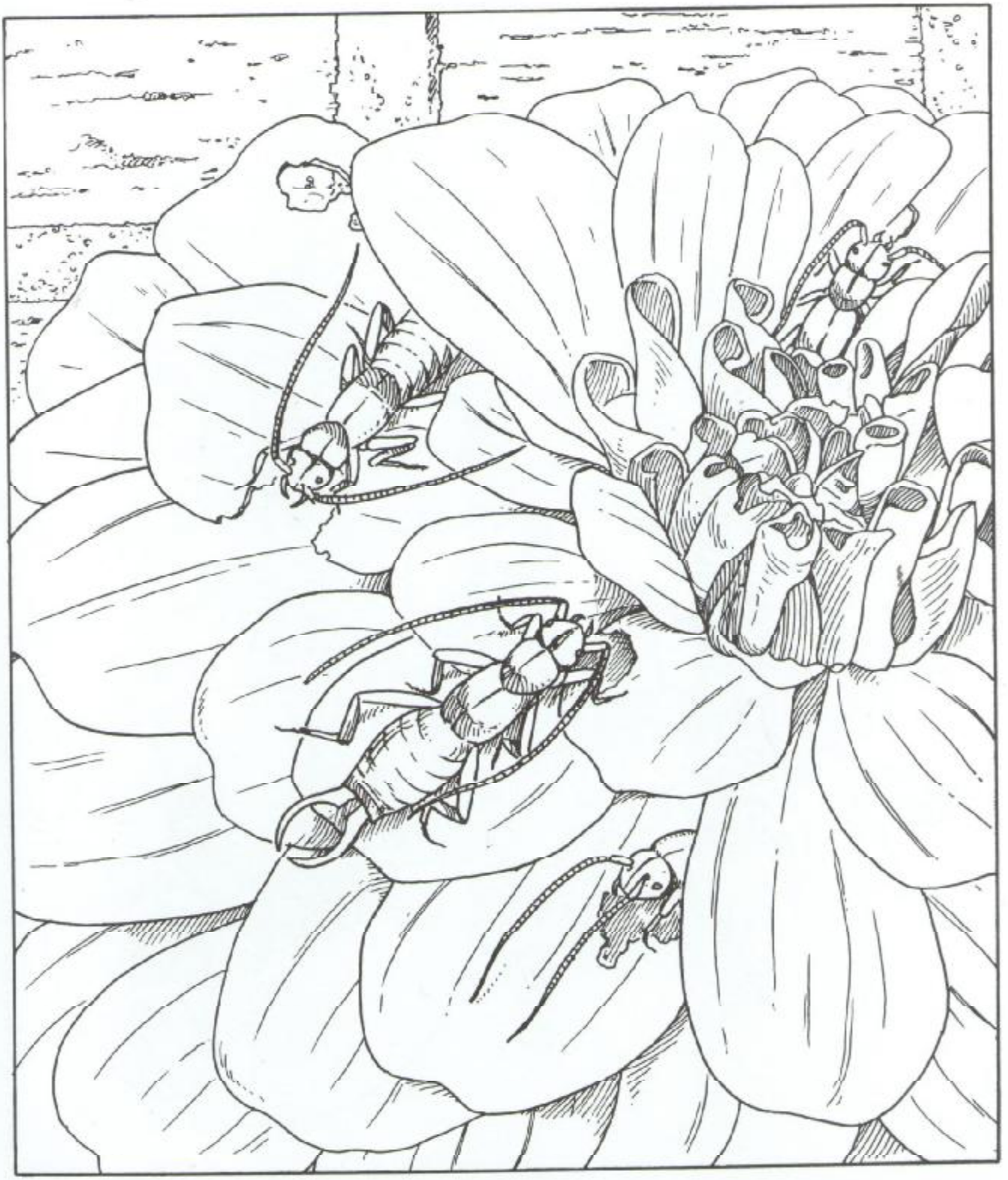
Millipedes (sometimes called "thousand-leggers") do not actually have a thousand legs, but they may have as many as 200 pairs of legs. The largest are about 11 inches long. Millipedes' bodies are divided into segments. Most species have hard plates on their backs, and millipedes defend themselves by excreting a toxic liquid or gas from glands on the sides of their bodies. *Narceus americanus*, a 4-inch-long black-and-red millipede, is common and easily spotted in wooded areas of the southeastern United States. Millipedes eat decaying plant material, and may live inside their food—for example, within a rotting log. Some also damage living plants, including garden plants. This millipede is approaching a marigold.

Mockingbirds may have originated in North America (Mexico and northward). They live in the southeastern United States and in Mexico all year, and some may be seen as far north as New England, even in winter. Male mockingbirds emit loud and varied songs, often imitating the songs and calls of other species of birds. They attack intruders in their feeding territory. About half the mockingbird's diet is insects and half is plant matter, but these birds eat a lot more insects during the spring and are mainly "vegetarian" in the winter months. Mockingbirds build substantial nests. The female does most of the construction work. The eggs are bluish-green, with reddish-brown blotches. Two or three clutches of five eggs each will be produced during a year. This bird is eating berries from wild rosehips plants.

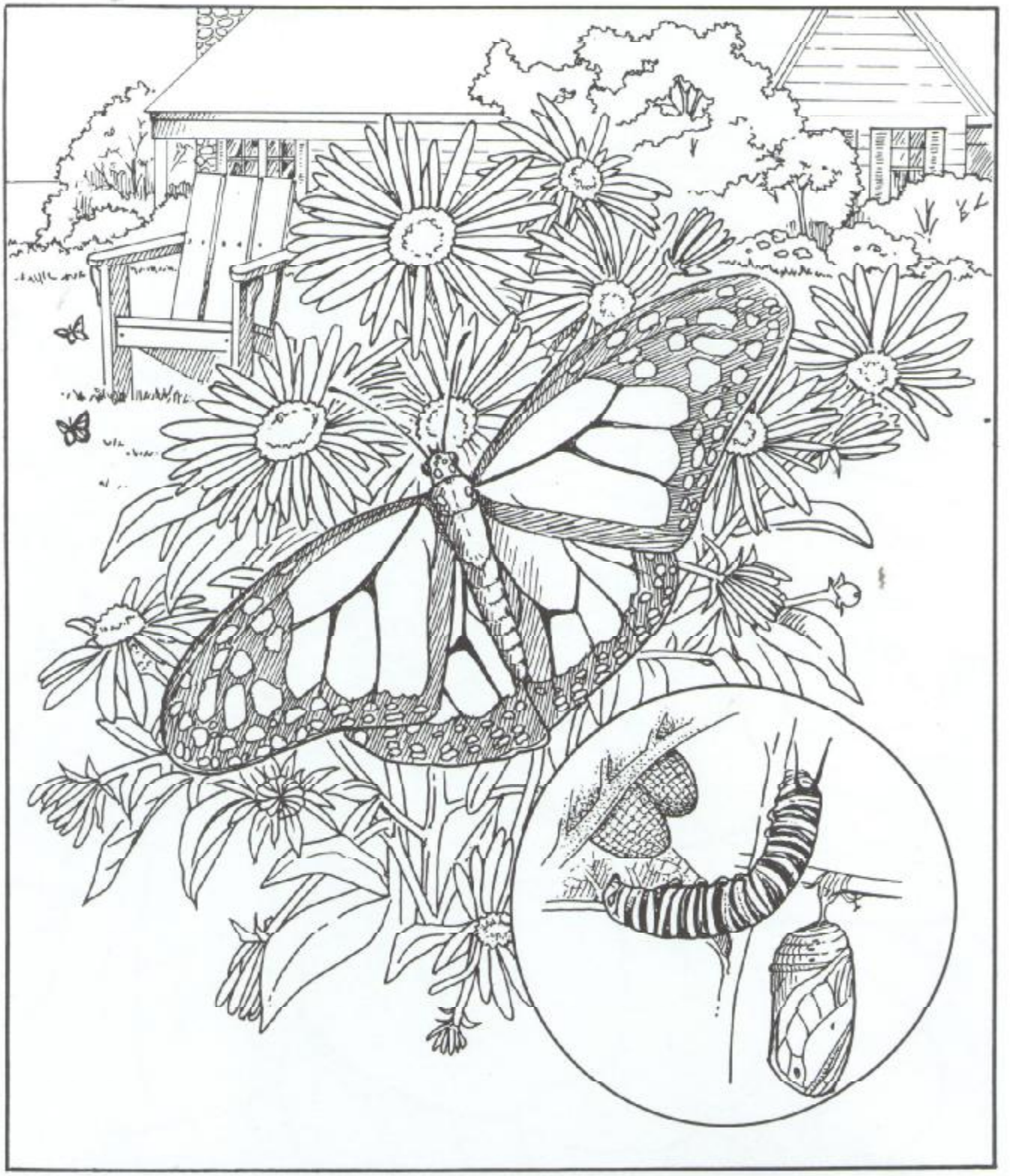
Bald-faced hornets live in lawns and meadows and on the edges of woods throughout North America. They have short, wide heads, and a pattern of white markings against the black background of their face, thorax, and abdomen, and on the first segment of their antennae. Mature hornets drink nectar and fruit juices. The larvae eat insects that have been prechewed by the adults. In springtime female hornets chew wood to a gray pulp from which they build small, hanging nests. The nest is constructed of many layers of cells and has an opening at the bottom. Adults are very protective of the nest and will sting any creature that approaches it. This nest is on a white oak tree.



The eastern bluebird and the western **bluebird**, known for their cheerful springtime songs, seem to like to live near people. A paler-colored subspecies of the eastern bluebird lives at altitudes of about 7,500 feet, in Arizona's mountains. These bluebirds have sky-blue plumage above, white and chestnut-colored feathers below. They commonly are seen in suburbs, rural villages, and farm country. Their nests always are enclosed: in a tree cavity, a woodpecker's abandoned hole, or a birdhouse provided by humans. Females do most nest-building work, but males share the task of incubating eggs and gather food for newly hatched nestlings. Sometimes bluebirds have to fight house sparrows or starlings that try to take over their nest. Bluebirds eat insects and berries. They usually go south during cold weather.



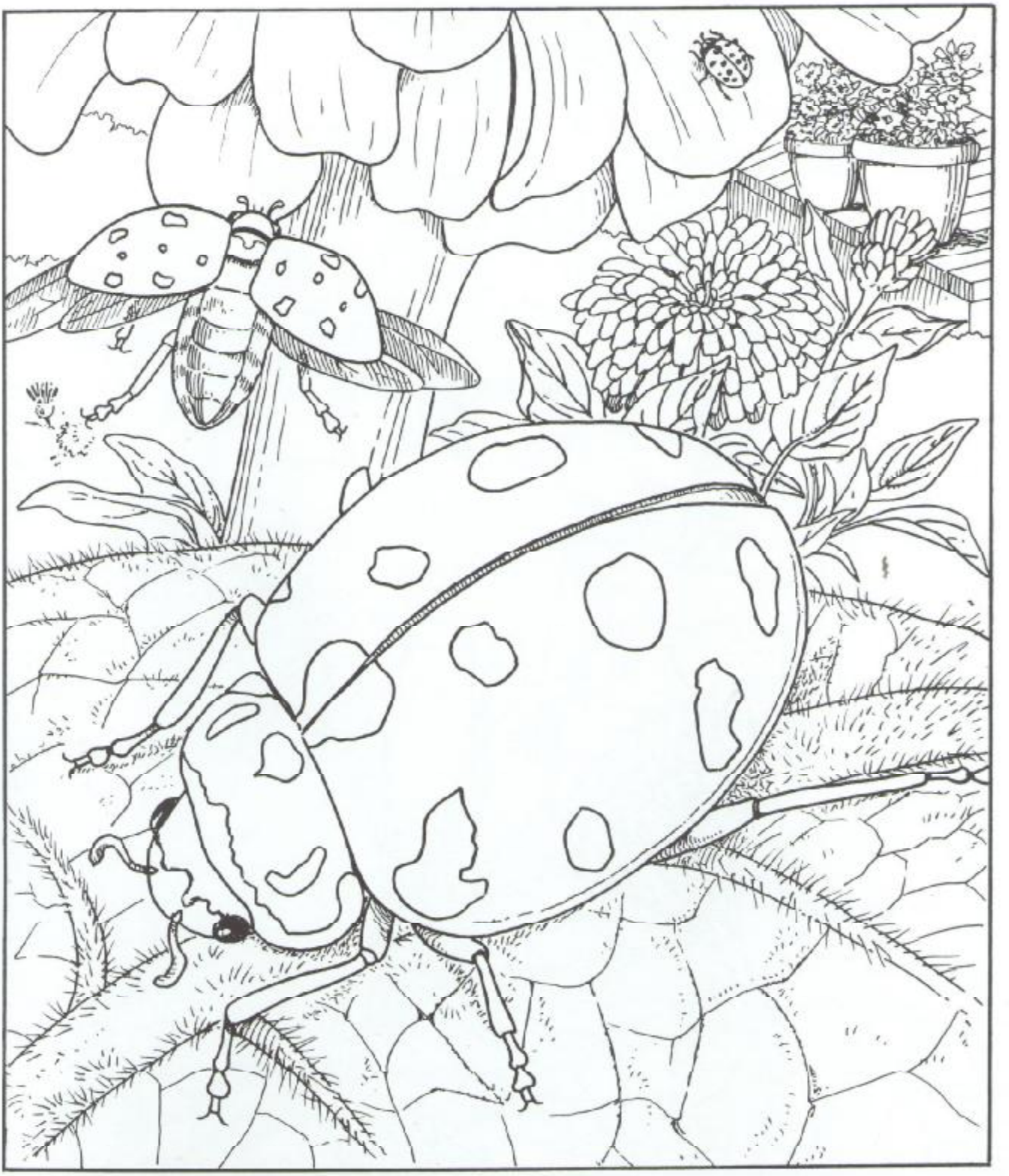
About 20 species in the long-horned earwig and common **earwig** families are found in North America. Shiny, brownish earwigs have slender, relatively flat bodies, with two long antennae extending from the head and a large pair of pincers at the end of the abdomen. Some earwigs have two pairs of wings, but others are wingless, and few earwigs fly. Female earwigs protect their eggs, which they lay in burrows, and feed the hatched nymphs until they can take care of themselves. Earwigs stay in dark places during the day. At night they emerge to feed on plants, smaller insects, and organic waste. Earwigs are not garden pests, though they sometimes damage flower blossoms, such as these zinnias.



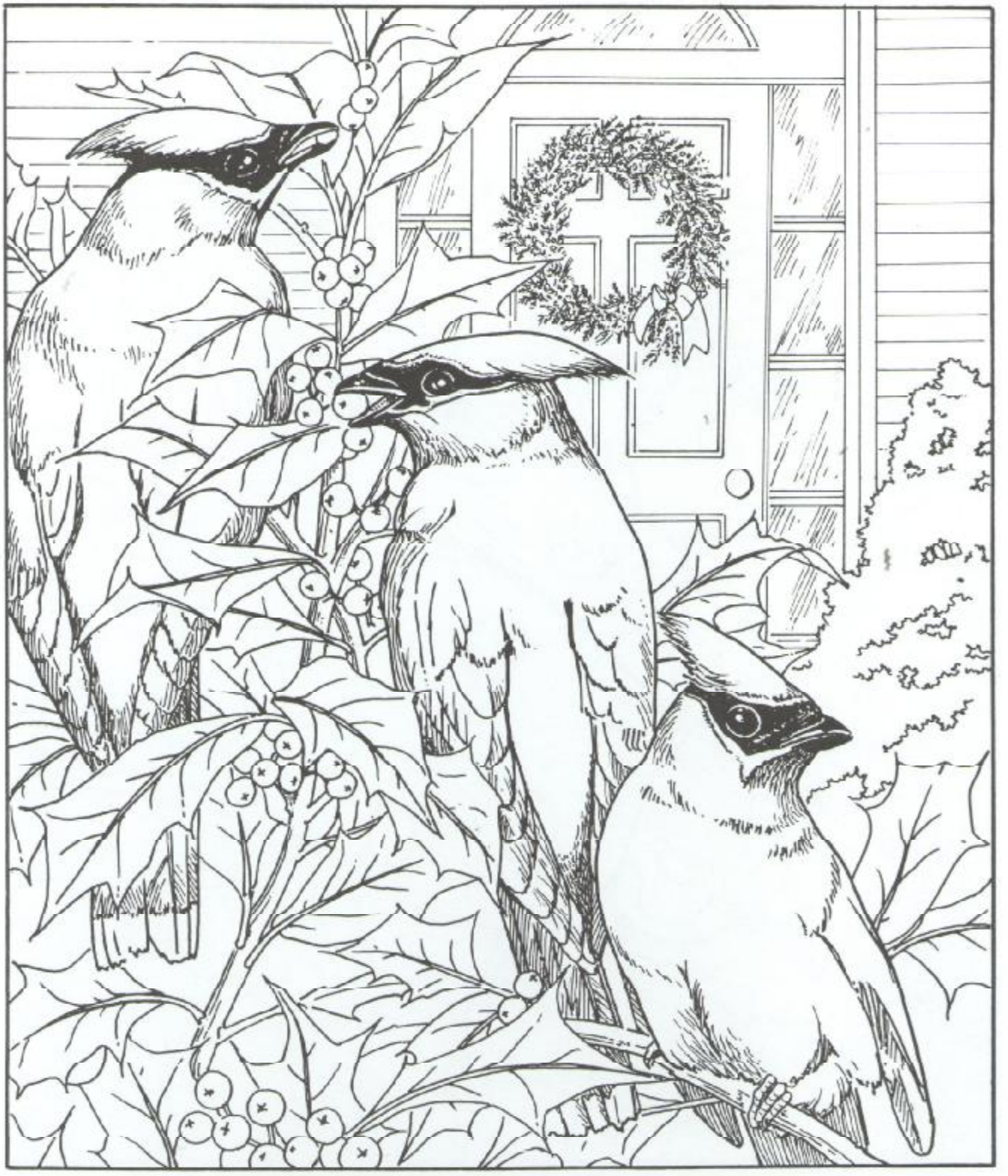
Monarch butterflies are large (3½" to 4" wingspan) and colorful. The upper surface of the male's wings is bright orange, with black veins and borders dotted with white spots. The lower surface is a paler yellow-orange. Females have a darker coloration. Monarchs are commonly seen in the northern United States (except the Northwest and Alaska) during July and August. Then they migrate southward. Monarchs are the only butterflies that migrate in both the autumn and the spring, as many birds do—but no single butterfly's lifespan includes a roundtrip. In winter, monarchs cluster in California cypress, eucalyptus, and pine groves and in fir forests in the Sierra Madre mountains of Mexico. The inset drawing shows the egg, caterpillar (white with black and yellow rings), and pupa. This butterfly is at a cluster of asters.

Eastern gray squirrels, common along the southern border of Canada and in the eastern United States as far west as the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Kansas, are 8 to 10 inches long, with a bushy tail equally long. Their fur is gray above and whitish below, though in some areas "melanistic phase" individuals with all-black fur are common. Gray squirrels often are seen in suburban areas and in city parks. These creatures spend a lot of time in trees. They are most active in the morning and the late afternoon. A gray squirrel may live as long as 15 years. The squirrels seen here are building a nest. Three to five young are born at a time. Western gray squirrels, which are bigger and have darker feet, are found in the forests of the Pacific coast states.

Rough harvester ants, which are reddish-brown, are seen in the southwestern United States, along with the smaller California harvester ant (from Texas to California) and the larger red harvester ant (in Louisiana and the western states). The rough harvester tends to live in cultivated fields and in bare areas such as sandy patches near roads. These ants are ¼" to ½" long. Their diet consists of seeds and grains, and they can damage crops greatly by cutting down plants in large areas. Worker ants, which give painful bites and stings, are wingless, but the larger females and smaller males both have wings. The anthill's nest entrance may be at ground level or may be protected by a conical mound of small pebbles. The yellowish-red California harvester ant does not damage plants.

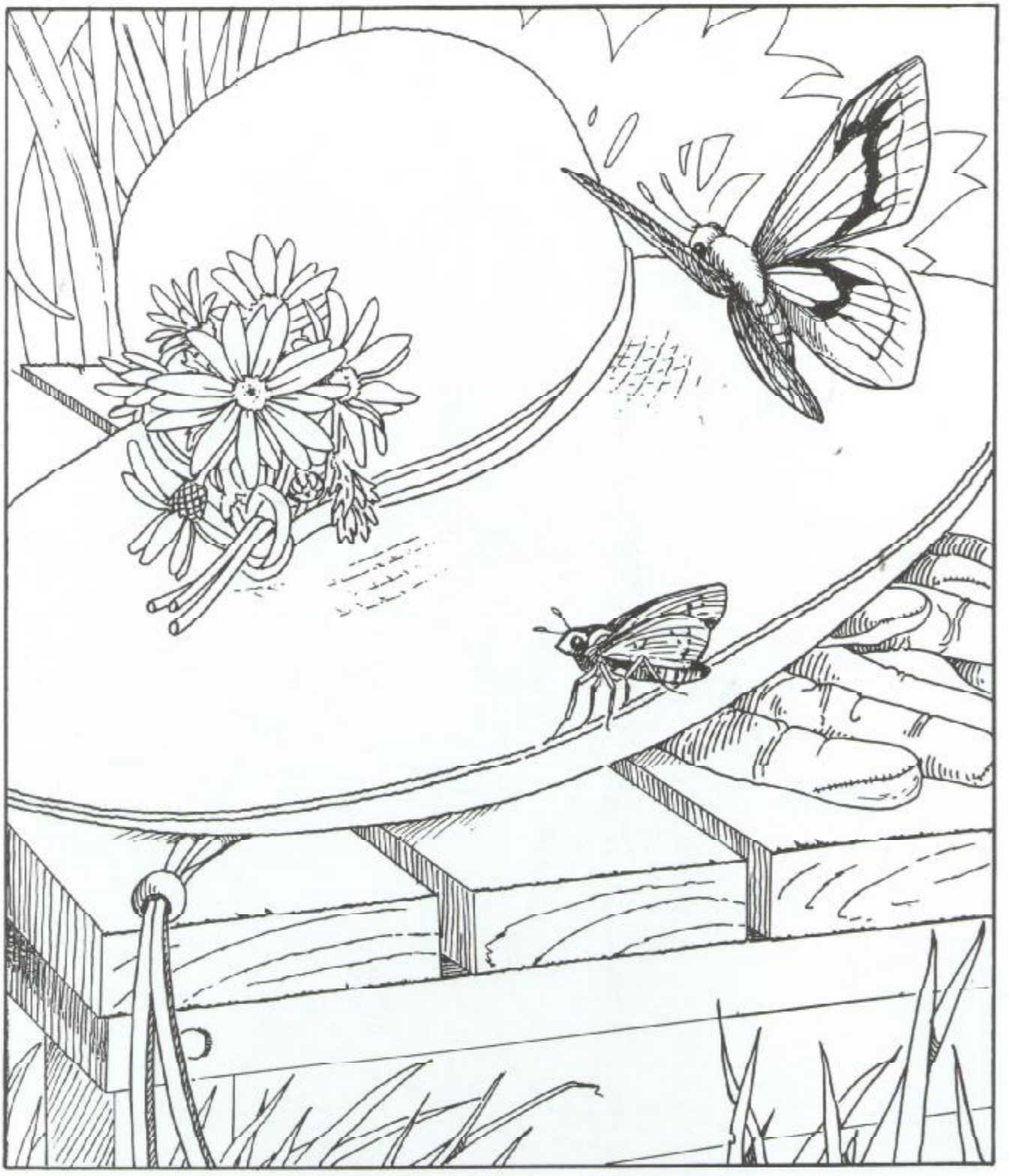


Ladybugs, or ladybug beetles, are called ladybird beetles in Great Britain. During the Middle Ages in Europe, they were named for "our Lady" (the Virgin Mary) by devout Roman Catholics in appreciation of their role in eating aphids that damaged grapevines. These noticeable small beetles, which range in size from about ⅛" to ⅜", are shiny red, orange, or yellow with black markings, or black with red or yellow markings. During the winter, large numbers of ladybugs may be found under fallen leaves or bark. Various species have 2, 3, 7, 9, 13, or even 15 spots, and the yellowish-red subspecies called the Spotless "Nine-spotted" Ladybug has no spots, or only one black spot. The egg clusters of the nine-spotted ladybug and those of the two-spotted ladybug are bright yellow.

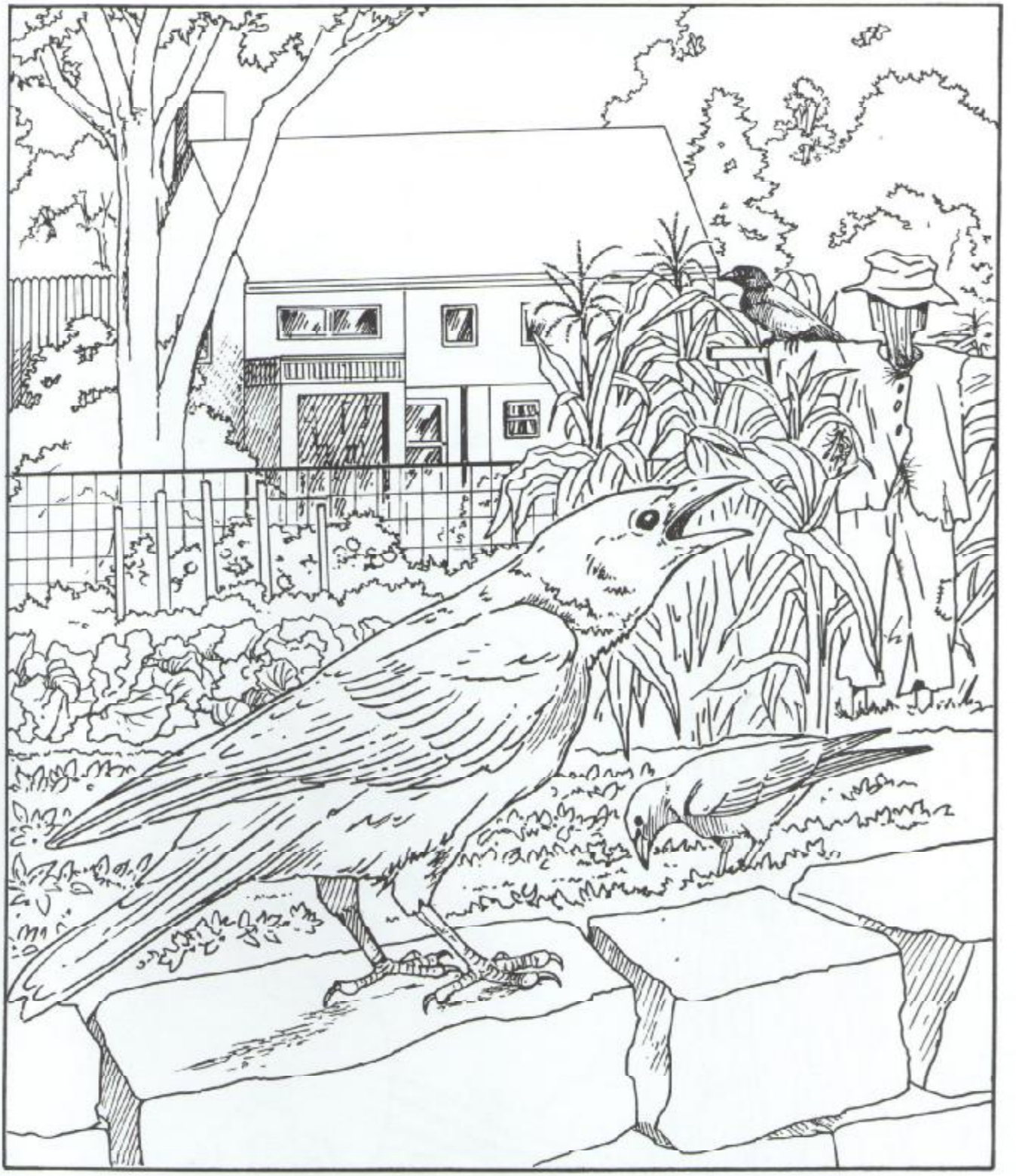


The **cedar waxwing** is primarily a fruit eater, but snaps up insects, too. This handsome, crested brown-and-gray bird has a black "face mask" and a pale-yellow belly. Cedar waxwings are very sociable; usually one is not seen alone. One observer described the sounds they often emit when in groups as "hissing, rather hoarse whispers" that could not be described accurately as song. By contrast, the cedar waxwing's call is a high-pitched, trilling whistle. These birds consume large amounts of berries and other fruits (they have been known to binge on cherries, and to become intoxicated from eating over-ripe, fermenting berries). They also eat vast quantities of insects, including the spiny larvae of the destructive elm-leaf beetle. These birds are clustered on a holly bush.

The face and head of **golden northern bumble bees** are mostly black, but the thorax and abdomen segments of this hairy bee are yellow and black, for both females and males. These bees live in open areas, including at roadsides and in forest clearings, in southern Canada and in most of the United States, except Florida. The similar golden-orange bumble bee (orange-yellow in color) and the red-tailed bumble bee are found in parts of the United States and Canada, and the American bumble bee lives throughout the United States and in southern Canada. Adult bumble bees drink nectar from flowers and eat honey at the hive. They may be seen flying about from May through September. Larvae consume honey. Bumble bees can sting a person many times, unlike honey bees, which lose their sting in the first attack.

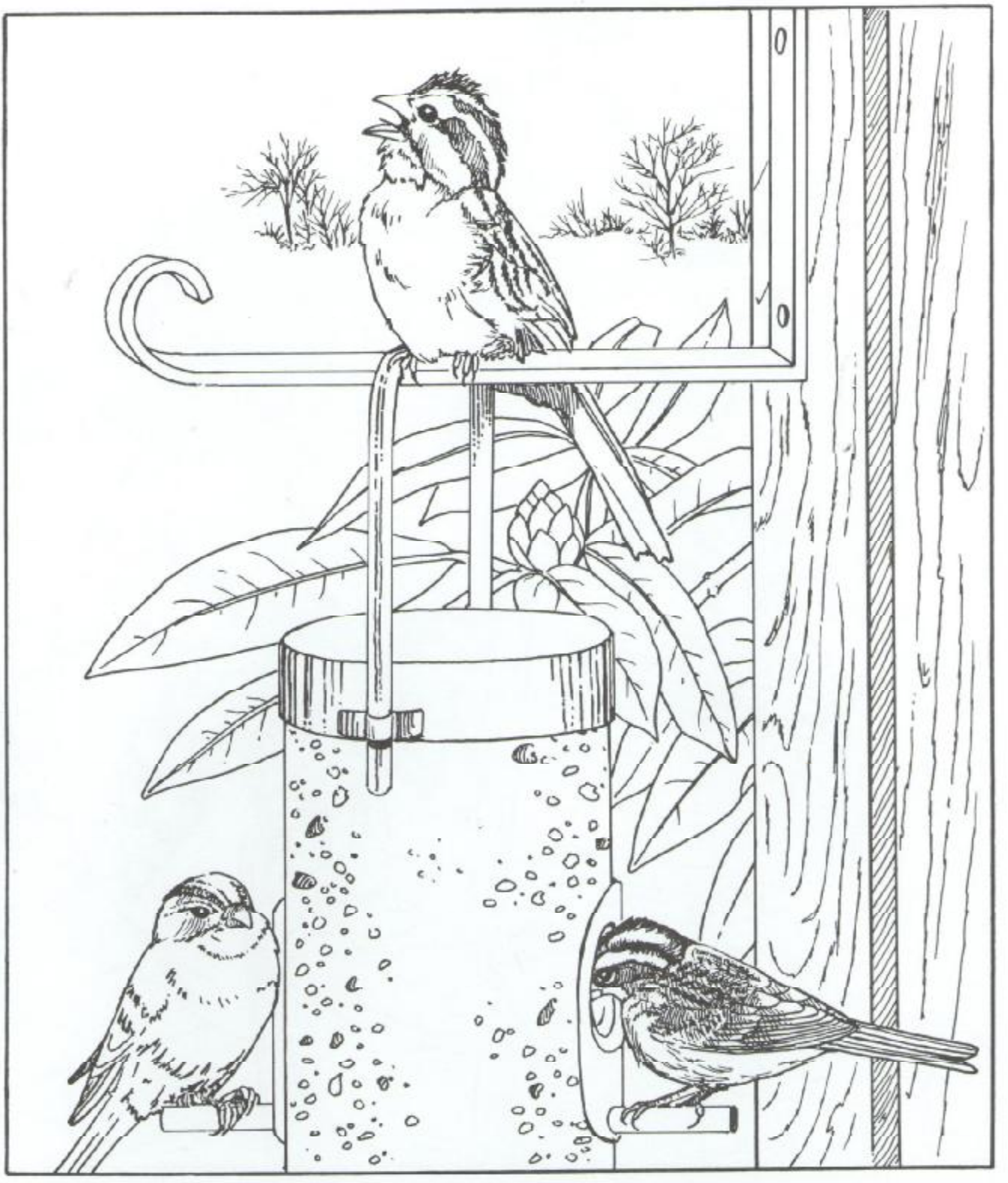


More than 175 species of skipper live in North America. Skippers share some traits of both butterflies and moths. They have large heads, thick bodies, and short wings. Their name describes their rapid, bouncing flight patterns. Male **long dash skippers** have bright-yellow "dashes" or bars of color arranged in a crescent-shaped band on the tawny orange upper surfaces of their wings, which have dull brown borders. Females have a tawnier coloration. The undersurfaces of the wings of both females and males are rusty gold in color. Long-dash skippers live in wet meadows, in marshes, and along streams, in southern Canada and in much of the United States, as far south as Virginia in the east and Colorado in the west.

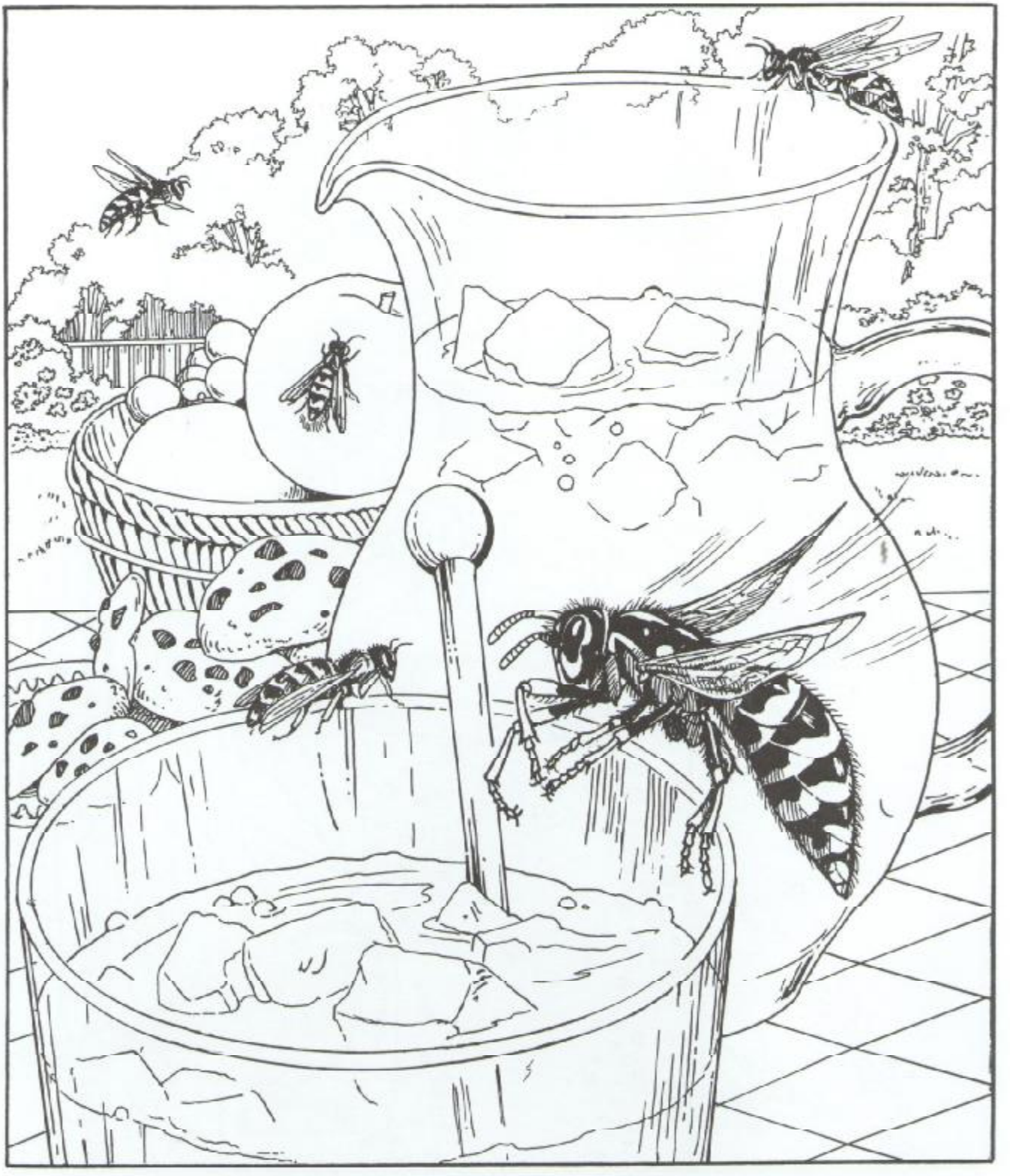


For thousands of years **crows** ate corn and other crops raised by Native Americans. These large, aggressive, jet-black birds still plague farmers and gardeners. Bold and intelligent, crows remain numerous in the eastern and central United States, despite the enormous changes humans have made in the environment, and despite people's determined efforts to drive them away or kill them. Crows are gregarious. One will "stand guard" while a group eats, and flocks numbering fifty thousand may roost together. Crows are useful by eating large insects, mice, rats, snakes, and dead animals, but they also consume much growing grain, and eat the eggs and nestlings of wild birds and farm poultry. The American crow, the largest species, is common in most of the United States and sub-Arctic Canada.

Long, powerful hind legs give **crickets** their jumping power. True crickets have broad bodies as much as 1" long, and tapering antennae. Males produce a rapid chirping sound with the aid of an organ at the base of their forewings. The cricket's song is much more high-pitched than the grasshopper's. Field crickets range in color from a dark reddish brown to black. Their antennae are longer than their body. They live in undergrowth, throughout North America as far north as Alaska, in areas that are neither very wet nor very dry. Their song consists of triple chirps. So-called Mormon crickets, which are not true crickets, were a plague on the Mormon pioneers' first crops when they settled in Utah in 1848, but California gulls arrived and ate the crickets, thus saving the crops.

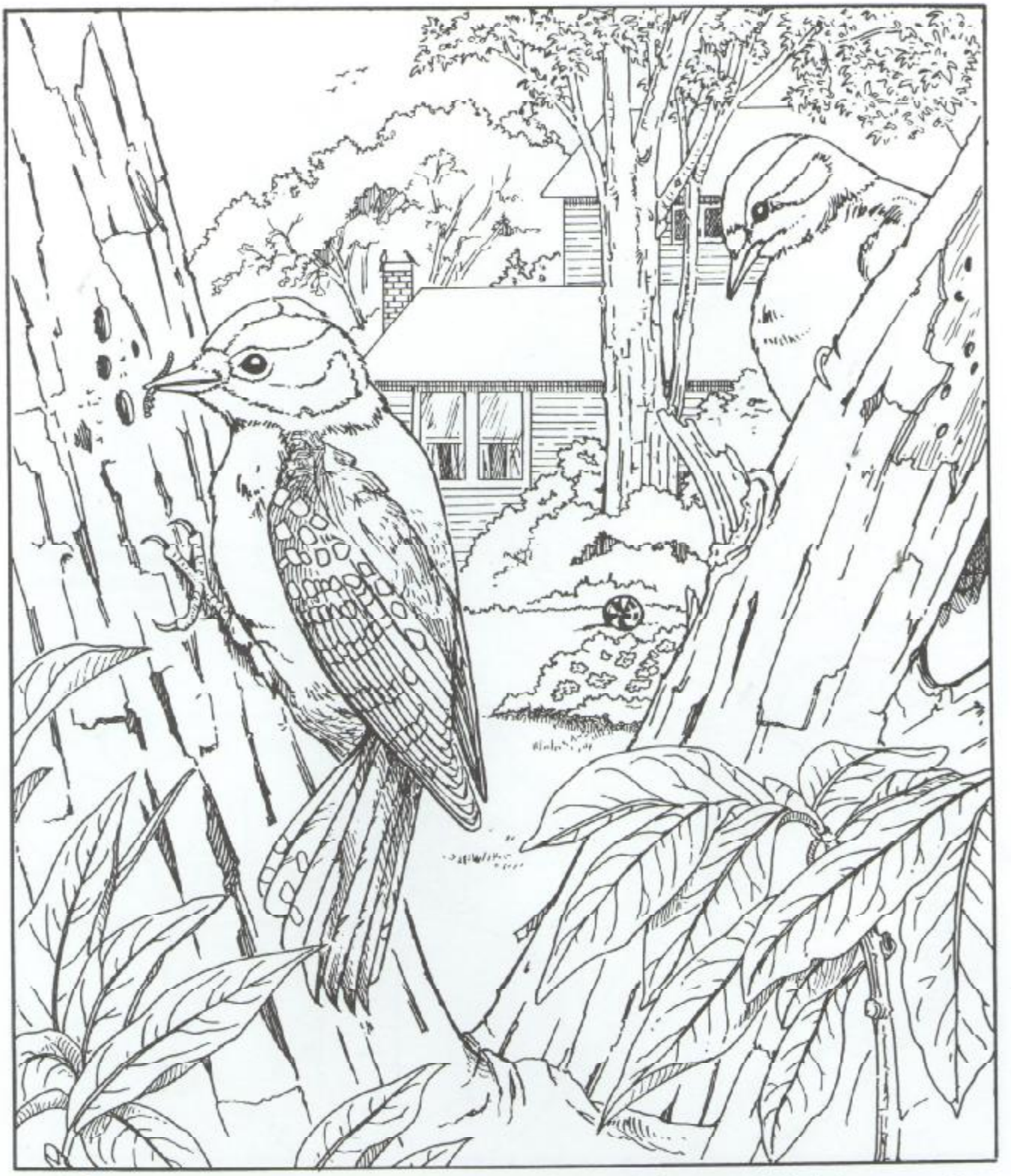


During the summer, songful **white-throated sparrows** are common in Canada, near the northern border of the United States, and in the mountains of New England, New York State, and Pennsylvania. On the crown of the head, dark stripes alternate with white or tan stripes. The front section of the eyebrow is bright yellow. White-throated sparrows produce two broods of 4 or 5 nestlings each, during that time. These sociable birds will gather at a favorite sleeping spot, such as an evergreen grove or hedge, at dusk. Most white-throated sparrows migrate southward in late September, going at least as far south as Ohio and as far as Florida, but some remain in New England throughout the winter.



Yellow jacket wasps can be a painful nuisance when people eat outdoors. Attracted by food and beverages, they nibble and sip what they find. Females sting repeatedly when they perceive a threat—and a person with no hostile intentions may be attacked. Yellow jackets are common in meadows and at the edges of wooded areas, throughout North America. They nest in the ground or in tree stumps or fallen tree trunks. When not sampling human food, adults consume nectar, and larvae are fed prechewed insects. In cold weather, all yellow jackets except mated females die. Eastern and western yellow jackets are very similar. The main variation is that the western species' first antennae segments are yellow. Both have black-and-yellow or black-and-white heads and bodies, and smoke-colored wings.

Baltimore orioles (also called northern orioles, along with Bullock's orioles) are very handsome orange-and-black birds. Their soft nests, woven by the females, hang near the tips of flexible tree branches, resembling open cloth sacks. Baltimore orioles, found east of the Rocky Mountains, from Texas north into Canada, spend winters in southern Mexico and in Central and South America. (Bullock's orioles, which have white wing patches and different head coloring, live in the west.) Orioles tend to make their homes in large oaks, maples, and elms, but also will choose large apple trees. Males do not participate in nest-weaving or in incubating the female's four or five eggs, but sing nearby while females are thus occupied. After the eggs hatch, they guard the nest and defend it if necessary.



The black-and-white **downy woodpecker**, the smallest North American woodpecker, lives year-round from Alaska to the Gulf Coast of the United States. In winter, these woodpeckers will gather to feast on fresh suet provided for them in backyard feeding stations. Their main diet, though, is insect larvae and ants. They gather their food from beneath the bark of trees and shrubs. After making a hole with a sharp beak, the woodpecker retrieves food with a long, spear-pointed tongue. These birds' four strong, mobile toes on each foot and their tail feathers, which have pointed, stiff tips, help them remain in position on vertical tree trunks while hammering or chiseling holes with their beaks. Males loudly "drill" a dead tree limb to challenge rivals and to attract females during mating season.

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